

Minister Kasaija launches National Budget Month, calls for citizen participation



From Left to Right: Patrick Ocalap, Deputy Secretary to the Treasury MoFPED, Stephen Aasiimwe, CEO PSF, Matia Kasaija, Minister MoFPED and Julius Mukunda, ED CSBAG.

"The Minister emphasized the significance of the National Budget Month, describing it as a vital platform for bringing the budget closer to the people. "The National Budget Month provides space for dialogue on national priorities and citizen concerns, and an opportunity for all stakeholders to better understand what the approved budget entails and how it will impact their lives," Kasaija said.

The Minister of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, Matia Kasaija, officially launched the National Budget Month for the fiscal year 2025/26, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and transparent

governance in delivering prosperity and improving citizens' well-being. "Governments across the world exist to deliver prosperity and improve the well-being of their citizens," Kasaija said. "This noble aspiration is only attainable through inclusive and transparent governance, particularly in how public resources are planned, allocated, and utilized."

During the launch, Kasaija highlighted the government's efforts to strengthen good governance and inclusivity in national budget processes. The NRM Government has continued to undertake deliberate reforms to strengthen good governance and inclusivity, including collaboration with Civil Society Organizations since 2018. This partnership has opened up the budget space, enabling unrestricted participation, greater access to budget information, and enhanced civic empowerment.

In a significant move, Kasaija officially launched the National Public Investment Management (NPIM) Policy, which aims to ensure that every shilling invested delivers real value through job creation, improved services, and sustained economic growth. The policy addresses long-standing challenges such as poor planning, delays in project execution, and inadequate maintenance of public assets.

The Minister called upon all stakeholders to support and implement the reforms, stressing that the success of the policy depends on collective effort. "I call upon all MDAs, development partners, civil society, and the private sector to support and implement these reforms," Kasaija said, as the country embarks on a new fiscal year with a renewed focus on transparency and accountability.

The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) has commended the government for approving the Public Investment Management Policy, saying it will ensure value for money in government investment projects and proper service delivery. According to Julius Mukunda, Executive Director of CSBAG, "With the PIMs Policy in place, we believe it will go a long way in ensuring value for money in all government investment projects and ensuring proper service delivery."

In a statement, Mukunda highlighted key budget priorities for the FY2025/26, including UGX 1.075 trillion for the Parish Development Model, UGX 100 billion for Emyooga SACCOs, and UGX 623.51 billion for essential medicines and health supplies. He also appreciated the government's commitment to supporting the private sector by allocating UGX 1.4 trillion for settling domestic arrears. "This is a testament to the government's commitment to support the private sector," Mukunda said.

However, Mukunda expressed concerns about several areas, including the low prioritization of the Agro-Industrialization, Tourism Development, Mineral-based Industrial Development, and Science and Technology (ATMS) strategy. "The budget strategy for FY2025/26 is anchored on four areas, including the ATMS. However, budget allocations to these key areas are estimated to remain meagre, with only about 5% of the FY2025/26 Budget allocated towards them," he noted.

Mukunda also raised concerns about the overly ambitious domestic revenue target of UGX 37 trillion, which he believes may be beyond the country's capacity. "Uganda's tax effort measured by the tax-to-GDP ratio has stagnated between 10% and 13% of GDP over the same period," he said. Additionally, he expressed concerns about increased domestic borrowing, which may hinder the effectiveness of the private sector.

The CSBAG Executive Director also highlighted climate finance challenges, noting that while the government has demonstrated commitment to climate finance, more needs to be done to ensure the utilization of these funds. Furthermore, he expressed concern about the reduction in local government financing, which has stagnated at UGX 5 trillion for the past three financial years. "We implore the government to reconsider and prioritize local government allocations," Mukunda said.

Mukunda also pointed out the issue of delayed implementation of projects, citing the Busega-Mpigi Expressway project as an example. "A prime example of this inefficiency is the Busega-Mpigi Expressway project, which has been delayed due to poor technical preparation and inadequate funding management," he said.

The budget process in Uganda is progressing well, but it's crucial that we prioritize the needs of the people. According to Dr. Arthur Bainomugisha, Executive Director of ACODE, "We must uphold transparency and accountability at every stage to ensure that the budget serves the interests of the majority, not just a select few."

Corruption continues to be a significant challenge, draining vital resources that could be used to improve the lives of Ugandans. "Corruption continues to drain vital resources, and our budget must directly confront this challenge to restore public trust and improve livelihoods," Dr. Bainomugisha emphasized.

One area that requires particular attention is climate change financing. With a large percentage of the population depending on agriculture, climate change impacts pose a significant threat to livelihoods. Therefore, it's essential that climate change financing is enhanced in the budget allocations to strengthen resilience and adaptation. By prioritizing transparency, accountability, and climate change financing, Uganda can ensure that its budget serves the needs of its people and promotes sustainable development.